



RAFFLES INSTITUTION
OPEN HOUSE ACTIVITY

THE CRAFT OF HISTORY

Name: _____ ()

Class: _____

Date: _____

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN!

When you study history in RI, you will not only be reading history but also **doing** history. History is not just about absorbing information from dusty old books written by ancient people!

It is also about understanding the historical method of gathering evidence from a variety of sources, analysing the data, and constructing new knowledge. The best part is that the historical method is not limited to museum artefacts and thousand-year-old documents; you can try it at home!



One Man's **TRASH** Is an Archaeologist's **TREASURE!**

Suggested Time: 40 min



Brief

In archaeology (the study of our past through physical remains), **beauty is definitely in the eye of the beholder**. The most unlikely and mundane items can become extremely valuable evidence of how people lived in the past. These include pottery shards, coins, and even fish hooks. Some of them were casually tossed onto the ground as rubbish by their owners, only to surface centuries later as artefacts in archaeological excavations! What a journey!

Now think about the trash we throw away. What would historians hundreds of years from now think if they were to excavate them? Can they learn anything about how Singaporeans lived in our present day?

Instructions

1. Look inside the rubbish bins in your home and note down 5 different items (artefacts) that your family has thrown away. Those feeling more adventurous can pick them out as specimens! If you are doing this, remember to wash them (if possible) and store them in ziplock bags! Hygiene comes first! ☺
2. Identify these artefacts and sketch them out in the box on the next page. This is to preserve your discovery in case the items are lost or damaged.
3. Describe your observations of each artefact, paying close attention to the smallest details. You never know what might end up as valuable clues!
4. Using these descriptions, think deeper about what each artefact reveals about the people who live in this house. In history, these are called inferences.
5. Imagine you have no idea of how people lived in the present day. With the inferences from the artefacts alone, draw out or describe a scene from the daily life in this household.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY:

Instead of using trash, ask your parents/siblings/friends to give you one item from their past (something old that you have never seen before), and complete the same steps above. You may be surprised at what you can discover !



Gathering and Analysing Evidence

Labelled Sketch	Detailed Observations	Deep Inference
e.g.  Empty can	e.g. - Made of thin metal - Traces of liquid substance - 'Sugar free' label - Slightly dented	What could this item be used as? What type of person could've owned this? e.g. - Mass-produced - Used as a beverage container - Health-conscious people - Not treated with care

Reconstructing the Past

What do the artefacts reveal about life in this household?

What would a day in the life of this household look like?

